



# State of Connecticut

Office of Early Childhood



**Office of Early Childhood**  
**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee**  
**S.R. 9 and H.R. 5 – Resolution Proposing Approval of a Collective Bargaining Agreement**  
**Between the Office of Early Childhood and the Connecticut State Employees Association**  
**(CSEA – SEIU Local 2001)**

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Good afternoon, Senator Bye, Representative Walker, ranking members Senator Kane and Representative Miner, and members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Myra Jones-Taylor, Executive Director of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today regarding S.R. 9 and H.R. 5 – Resolution Proposing Approval of a Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the Office of Early Childhood and the Connecticut State Employees Association (CSEA – SEIU Local 2001).

The Office of Early Childhood and CSEA – SEIU Local 2001 reached a collective bargaining agreement after nine months of negotiation in January 2014. The agreement covers licensed family child care providers and unlicensed family, friend and neighbor providers who accept Care4Kids funds, the state's child care subsidy program and was ratified by union members on February 14.

This agreement addresses provider rates, incentives, as well as professional development to enhance quality in child care settings. Since 2001, Care4Kids rates have not changed, not only placing a financial burden on providers, but also affecting child care quality. For years, little attention had been paid to family child care providers. These providers care for the majority of our infants and toddlers, children who are in the earliest years of their lives and need a good start. This agreement marks a significant step in the right direction to address provider rate consistency and program quality improvement.

Rates for licensed family child care providers will increase by a cumulative 12 percent over a four-year period. By the fourth year, it will also close the 26 percent rate differential between licensed family child care providers and center-based providers for the care of infants and toddlers. The rate increase will help to attract and retain quality early childhood professionals. This policy change is critical because quality of care is of utmost importance for our youngest children. For unlicensed family, friend and neighbor providers, the rate will increase over the four years.

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The conversations that I engaged in with union representatives throughout the process primarily focused on the quality of child care provided to our state's most vulnerable children, from birth through age 5. At all times, the need for professional development and provider support remained at the front and center of our discussions. This is demonstrated in the agreement with a commitment of \$750,000 for professional development over a four-year period. This funding may be used by providers for training, certification, and attaining a college degree in early childhood. Additionally, family child care providers will undergo a four-hour orientation session focusing on health, safety and appropriate developmental learning.

This agreement also provides incentives for providers to become licensed family child care providers including reimbursement of licensing fees and a one-time bonus for licensees who maintain their license for one year. Encouraging license-exempt providers to seek licensure through incentives is a great way to help increase quality child care opportunities for low-income families as well as increase the provider's level of financial economic security.

This historic agreement demonstrates the Governor's commitment to raise the level of quality in child care settings and increase opportunities for young children to be in safe and healthy learning environments. The agreement also helps to foster a partnership with these dedicated child care providers who care for our state's most valuable residents, our children.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.